

Survey: we enjoy the Club but we're not exactly youngsters!

Perfins Club members revealed a lot about themselves and their collecting habits in the 2001 membership survey. Slightly more than 11% of the total membership responded to the survey which was published in the January *Bulletin*.

In general, members are pleased with the services the Club offers its members, although several made important suggestions that the Club leadership will review and implement whenever they can.

The survey did reveal that we're not a group of youngsters: we're all

over 40, 55% are between 60 and 79 years old, and 7% are over 80. Interestingly enough, that corresponds fairly well with a survey of its general readership conducted last year by *Linn's*. That survey revealed that the median age of stamp collectors is 63 and that only 6% were under 40.

The good news is that 85% say they almost certainly will renew their membership, 4% said they probably would, and 8% said they are already life members.

More than 80% of our members collect

U.S. perfins, but 76% also collect foreign perfins, and 43% collect perfins on cover.

Nearly half (46%) say they collect pre-cancel perfins (prepers) and slightly more than a third (36%) say they collect revenue perfins.

Curiously, although 82% say they collect U.S. perfins, only 62% own the current U.S. catalog. Just over 60% say they own at least one foreign perfins catalog.

Club auctions got rave reviews with 90% calling them valuable, although 21% say they have never bid in an auction. About a quar-

ter of the members say they think auction prices are inflated by the bids of a few buyers. More than 80% called descriptions of the lots in the auction accurate and helpful, although one overseas member wishes the lots included Stanley Gibbons as well as Scott catalog numbers.

The *Bulletin* also meets with member approval. All those responding called the *Bulletin* valuable, and 90% called it very valuable. All but 2% read most or all of the *Bulletin* as soon as it arrives.

When it comes to

(Continued on page 77)

Szymanski on Survey: thank you for letting us hear from you!

Seventy-four members, about 12% of the membership, thought it important enough to take the time to fill out and send in the 2001 Membership Survey to Floyd Walker, our *Bulletin* editor. In most direct mailings that would be a tremendous response! In this instance I was disappointed that so many members chose not to participate.

To draw conclusions on the operation of the Club from such a small but, hopefully, active, 12% of the membership may not be valid but it is all that we have to go on, so I would like to share several of my observations on the results. Comments are always welcome, constructive comments even more so!

Because of the overwhelmingly positive response to several questions, I can report that our members are very pleased with the *Perfins Bulletin*, the Sales Departments,

the Club Auctions, the 1998 U.S. Catalog, the Publications Sales Department, and the Library.

Many comments received attest to the hours of free labor expended for the Club by Floyd Walker, Bob Combs, Millard Driscoll, Rudy Roy, Joe Coulbourne, John Randall, Dave Lightle and Sylvia Maniscalco as well as Jackie Ryan and Marvin Mech, the last two members recently having retired from their posts after many years of service.

All other questions asked received answers that were heavily positive over negative but also had many members who have had no experience with and thus did not rate these other club activities. Questions about the Railroad Catalogue and topical checklists were almost evenly divided as many respondents pointed out that all of the

(Continued on page 77)

Survey: members seek basic information about perfins collecting

(Continued from page 65)

content, results were a little more mixed. While 60% or more think the *Bulletin* contains about the right amount of information about U.S. and foreign perfins, 36% would like to see more about foreign perfins and 25% would like to see more about U.S. perfins.

All the Club services got ratings of valuable or better, but some, like the revenue perfins catalog project, the sunshine committee, the web site, the U.S. data base project, the mentor program, and the perfins slide show, got substantial "no opinion" ratings.

A number of members indicated their interest in getting more involved in Club operations, although several who did that failed to include their names on the survey form.

Several members spoke to the need for more information about foreign perfins, including the availability of foreign catalogs. To that end, the *Bulletin* editor is in the process of compiling a list of all current foreign perfins catalogs and the sources from which they can be purchased.

One other point came through fairly clearly in the survey: not all our members, no matter how long they have been collecting perfins, are well-informed about per-

fins. A number of basic questions were asked which indicate a need for continuously providing fundamental information in the *Bulletin* and in other Club publications.

A copy of the survey details has been provided to each Club officer and committee

chair for review and action as appropriate.

Members have told us what they think and the Club leadership now will work to improve what is an already excellent organization.

One member may have best put it in perspective. "You probably

don't need to do any more. Just keep up the enthusiastic level on what's being provided now. The enthusiasm in this club is exceptional; let's not try to do too much and burn out."

Szymanski reacts to survey results

(Continued from page 65)

information seems to be covered in the new U.S. Catalog and need not be duplicated unless there is a tremendous amount of additional information.

The question with the greatest "no response" was the U.S. Reference database. That is because this is only in the planning stages and is soon to be announced.

Questions about the *Perfins Bulletin* elicited all positive responses!

Questions about the Auctions brought some surprising responses: 23% of those responding felt prices were too high, 3% felt the prices were too low (not an option listed!) and the remaining thought prices were just right! I wonder how many of the members responding ever watch the e-Bay auctions with perfins offered to collectors from around the world? I also wonder if the response was objectively or subjectively given? Most collectors like to buy low and most sellers like to sell high!

Concerning the question on reference material, I found it intriguing that only 62% of the members own a copy of the 1998 US Perfins Catalog and 18% said they did not even own an older one! However, in the next question about what members collected, 82% of the members said they collected U.S. perfins, so I surmise that the 18% who do not also do not own a U.S. Catalog. My only comment to the other 30%, and all others reading this who collect U.S. perfins, is that you really need a 1998 U.S. Perfins Catalog. Watch the *Bulletin* because the price is going up soon be-

cause of increased printing and shipping costs. If you ever intend to buy one, now is the time!

The greatest measure of the response to this survey was that no respondent indicated that he or she would not renew their membership next year and only 4% indicated "probably"! With a 96% "almost certain" and life member response, the indication is that the club is fulfilling its mission to the members. Thank you for your vote of confidence!

Is there anyone out there under 40? (7% over 80, 55% 60 to 79, and 37% 40 to 59)! I trust that everyone realized this was an age and not an IQ question! Whatever you thought the question was, let me say that the answer I interpreted was that we are all "older and smarter" and getting more so every day!

In summary, I do wish to thank each and everyone who took the time to participate in this survey. Also, thank you for the tremendous amount of additional advice, questions and comments.

We will look at each and see if and how your recommendations can be implemented. Also thank you to all who volunteered to become involved in club activities and especially to those who included your names. Note that since we did not ask for names, many of the volunteers remain unknown to us!

If you volunteered for anything, please send Floyd Walker your name. Otherwise we will never know who you are!